





## Letters to the Secretary of State on the Subject of Pauperism.

[First published in the Columbia Republican, in the fall of 1853.]

(No. 1.)

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State elect, of  
the State of New York.*

A great change has occurred in the political affairs of the State, which, from its magnitude, might well cause amazement, had it not been frequently paralleled in previous portions of its history.

This, sir, is a great State, rich in natural resources, and abounding in every element of prosperity and wealth. Its inhabitants feel this instinctively, and they desire that their rulers and higher officers should so direct their affairs as to develop this latent affluence in the highest degree. Again and again have they been seduced by high sounding professions of zeal for the public welfare to elevate different political parties to power, in the hope that they would seriously devote themselves to preparing and perfecting measures which should increase the guarantees of individual freedom, and swell the measure of public prosperity. You know, sir, how often they have been disappointed in these anticipations. You, who understand the history of our State so well, are aware how few have been the measures, comprehensive in their scope, noble in their aim, and beneficial in their results, which have been devised by our statesmen. Their time and their talents have too frequently been devoted to the perpetuation of their own power, to increasing their own emoluments, and to the distribution of the public patronage to their own friends and political adherents.

Is it wonderful that the people, thus betrayed and insulted, should oscillate frequently in political affairs? Is it not natural  
[Senate, No. 72.]

that they should be indignant when their interests are neglected, and their wishes are contemptuously opposed by their public servants? The present State government assumed the management of affairs with the loudest professions of integrity, and of zeal for the public service, but no single pledge has been redeemed, no single promise has been fulfilled. The management of our canals was never so expensive, and never so inefficient. Our State Prisons have deteriorated in discipline, security and revenue. The finances of the State are seriously dilapidated, and, in a word, all the functions of government are badly performed.

The people, knowing these things, have decreed that our party should have another trial. You have been borne into power by a mighty wave of public indignation, swelled up by the selfishness, the incompetency, and the profligacy of our adversaries. If you dedicate all your admitted powers and energies with singleness—if you resolutely exclude those miserable harpies who infest the perlieus of the capital and the public offices, in hopes of plunder from your councils—"if all the ends you aim at are your country's"—you may rest assured of a long lease of power, and a long career of honorable effort. If on the contrary, you confine yourself to mere party aims, forgetful of the lofty objects of public importance which solicit your attention, your public career will be a short one. The reflux wave, which will bear you back to the depths of obscurity will be far mightier than that which elevated you to power.

I trust and believe, sir, that your own good heart will dictate to you, more powerfully than even the exigencies of party necessity, or the demands of personal ambition, to aim at the inauguration of a new era in politics, and give us a glimpse of that "good time" which we have been told so long is "coming." That our code of procedure will be completed with wisdom and judgment, and its crudities and anomalies thoroughly purged away: That our canals will be finished speedily and economically as they would be if they were controlled by sagacious and experienced individuals for their own benefit: That our system of criminal law will be revised and made to conform more nearly to the requirements of enlightened political science: That energetic mea-



asures will be adopted for the accumulation and diffusion of agricultural knowledge : That our State prisons will be purged of all under keepers, guards and other officials, whose characters are more debased than those of the prisoners over whom they are placed : That pauperism in all its relations be thoroughly investigated : That such of our existing laws as are found to be useless or injurious will be altered or repealed, and that such new provisions as may be required will be promptly inserted in the statute book.

This is a sweeping programme, sir, but the state of things amongst us, and, if I am not egregiously mistaken, the *will of the people*, imperiously require that these reforms should be accomplished.

I am aware that you cannot accomplish them alone, the Constitution confers no legislative power on you. But you can do much if you cannot do all. As a member of the Canal Board you can do much to stem the tide of corruption which infests that department; as an ex-officio Regent of the University, you may effect great things for the increase and diffusion of agricultural knowledge, and as charged by existing laws to report annually on crime and pauperism, you will be enabled to present these questions to the Legislature in a manner which will readily ensure the assent of that body.

Truly yours,

FRANKLIN.

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( No. 2. )

To ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State elect, of the State of New-York:*

In my last letter I called your attention to several reforms which I believe to be imperatively demanded by the people of this State. It is not my intention in this series of letters to discuss all these questions, although at some future time I may feel called upon to do so. At present I shall limit myself to an examination of the subject of *pauperism* and the suggestions of such amendments and alterations as I think ought to be made in our existing laws for the care and support of the poor.

It is a broad and comprehensive subject, sir! It is not to be mastered in a moment, or disposed of in a day. If you would fathom its breadth and depth, you must wade through masses of facts and statistics which would cause a mere *fancy* statesman to stand aghast. You must look with your own eyes on the masses of the poor in our larger cities—you must behold the filth, the disease, the nakedness, the squalor, the mental and moral corruption aggregated there. You must learn for yourself, the size of the army of children who are growing up amongst us with the seeds of disease in their bodies, and the still fouler leprosy of guilt festering deeply in their souls. I know these sights are appalling; that it is no holiday task to survey them, yet I hope you will not shrink from the undertaking, because it will enable you to use your official station far more effectually for the amelioration of these evils than if the source of your knowledge was only heresay. You will recollect the saying of the man to the woman of Samaria: "Now we believe, not because of *thy saying*, for we have heard him *ourselves*." These Samaritans were like other human beings, and knowledge acquired through the medium of their own senses was far more operative on their actions than that which they obtained through the testimony of others.

If however, you are unable from the want of time or opportunity to enter upon an original and personal investigation of this great question, let me entreat you to give a careful and heedful attention to the facts and suggestions which it is my purpose to lay before you. There may be little enough of *talent* in these letters, but I assure you that I have not been niggardly of *time* in acquiring the information that I shall lay before you, and I think I may say, you may safely rely upon the accuracy of every statement I may make.

Perhaps you will ask me why I do not seek some other channel through which this reform may be accomplished. I will answer this question before I enter directly on the subject of pauperism. The only other ways that occur to me are, 1st, to enter the Legislature myself, or 2d, to interest the members of the Legislature by personal solicitation, or 3d, to awake public attention through public meetings called for the purpose, or 4th, by frequent publi-

lications in newspapers published in different sections of the State.

I am quite too humble an individual ever to be thought of for a seat in the Legislature, and this settles the first mode of procedure. For the second you well know that members of the Legislature are divisible into two classes: Those who are incompetent to understand these questions, and those who are competent. No one knows better than yourself that the first of these classes is greatly in the majority in these latter days. The class of competent legislators may in their turn be subdivided into two, viz: Those who will trouble themselves with no questions which will not enure to their own personal advantage, or redound to their own personal glory. I could expect no help from this class; nothing they could do in this way would help them to a reelection or elevate them to a higher office, or put money in their purses. The other class consists of workers who are already overburdened with labor. You were of this class when you were in the Assembly. You will recollect what a long string of acts for the county of Onondaga and the city of Syracuse, and the inhabitants thereof you procured the passage of, and in order to procure votes for those bills you were obliged to do the legislative work of those members who were no more able to do it for themselves than the desks they dozed over. You would hardly have thanked me if I had urged you to undertake the management of a bill which would require the undivided attention of several able members to insure its passage.

It would require a popular orator of name and fame, to draw together numerous audiences, before whom these statements could be made with a hope to interest them to activity in the work of Poor Law Reform. But I am no popular orator nor could I secure the services of such, hence I should only fail if I attempted this mode of procedure. If I were to abuse the whig party roundly, and rake up all their sins of omission and commission, I should expect my letters would receive the most extensive publicity thro' the democratic press. Or if I performed a similar kind office for the democrats no doubt the whig press would not prevent my charges from being sustained, but as I only recite—



I do not suppose either whigs or democrats will trouble themselves with what I write. I have therefore no resource but to appeal to you.

FRANKLIN.

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( No. 3. )

TO ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State elect, of the State of New-York :*

You may ask me why I do not address these letters privately through the post-office, rather than through the medium of the press. My answer is that I have tried this method before, and found it quite useless. One of your predecessors acknowledged the receipt of my letters, and politely expressed his intention to examine the whole matter with care, after which he would devise a remedy for the evils complained of. This was the last of it ; he probably never thought of the matter again, after writing the letter of acknowledgment. Some of his friends wanted places as lock-tenders or collectors on the canals, or they desired to secure some fat contract. Negotiations for these would pay in the solid currency of votes, both in conventions and at the polls ; labors for the poor would only leave as a reward the consciousness of doing good. How could he be expected to work for such poor pay ?

Another predecessor received my letters, but did not condescend to notice them in any way. This was better, because he broke no promise ; but it convinced me that I must take another method if I would secure the co-operation of those in power. I have chosen this method, therefore, that the people may be aware that the great evils of pauperism have been brought distinctly to your notice. I really believe, sir, that you will esteem it a pleasure, as well as a duty, to exert all the influence of your official station in favor of poor law reform ; but if I am unfortunately mistaken in this, I wish to deprive you of the excuse for negligence or indifference, that your attention has never been called to the subject, and that you were not aware how bad our condition really was.



If you prove, as I trust you will, efficient in remedying the evils of our poor laws, I am not without hopes that the publication of these letters will, in some degree, assist your laudable endeavors, by awakening and informing the public mind ; so that you may find public opinion in your favor when you shall be pleased to bring the subject to the attention of the Legislature.

These, sir, are my reasons for addressing you through the press, and having now written all that I designed to say by way of preface, I proceed at once to the main subject of these letters :

*First*—PAUPERISM is rapidly increasing in the State of New-York !

You will scarcely believe that this proposition is true, if you travel on any of our great thoroughfares—the Central, the Erie, or the Northern railroads, lake Erie, Ontario, or Champlain, and, above all, on the Hudson river—your eyes are greeted and gladdened with evidences of wealth, “ which far outshine the wealth of Ormus or of Lud.” Splendid mansions are rising in every direction, the grounds are richly embellished, villages are formed on the corn-fields of yesterday, and the village of yesterday is the city of to-day. You see no paupers—all are genteelly dressed—our shipping has doubled, and the stream of California gold flows in upon us with a tide that knows no ebb. Looking complacently at all these signs of almost fabulous prosperity, you will not believe that the plague-spot of pauperism is within us, eating into our very vitals, and spreading, day by day, with fearful rapidity. Yet nothing is more true. You will very soon be inducted into the Secretary’s Office in the State Hall. Seated in the comfortable arm chair provided for your accommodation, you may reach, without rising from it, the records which will demonstrate the truth of the assertion, beyond reach of all controversy or cavil. These records show that, in the year 1831, the total number of persons relieved and supported at the public cost in the State of New-York, was 15,564 ; in the year 1841, the number was 61,203 ; in 1851, the number was 125,473 ; and, in 1852, it amounted to 151,399.

These facts speak for themselves, and speak loudly, too ; but you will not understand their full significance without contemplating them from different points of view, and in relation with different objects. Niagara is one and indivisible—it never changes ; yet he who looks at it solely from Goat Island, carries away with him a widely different idea of its appearance from him who has seen it only from Table Rock. Let us try to avoid all one-sided views, and endeavor to comprehend these startling facts in their totality. The numerical increase of paupers during the ten years between 1831 and 1841, was 45,639 ; or, in other words, pauperism had increased 293 per cent., or in still other words, there were nearly four paupers in 1841 where there was only one in 1831. The numerical increase of paupers from 1841 to 1851, was 64,270, or 105 per cent. There were two paupers in 1851 where there was only one in 1841. If we compare the number of persons relieved and supported in 1851, directly with those relieved and supported in 1831, we shall see that during that period of twenty years, the numerical increase was 109,909. The increase per cent was 706 ; or, rather, more than eight paupers in 1851 for one in 1831.

The population of the State in 1831 was 1,918,608;<sup>2</sup> in 1841, it was 2,428,921 ; in 1851, it was 3,097,394. The numerical increase of the population for the ten years between 1831 and 1841 was 510,313. The increase per cent was 26 ; or there were 1-26 persons in 1841, for 1 in 1831. The numerical increase of the population for the ten years between 1841 and 1851 was 668,473. The increase per cent 27 ; or there were 1-27 persons in 1851, for 1 in 1841.

If we compare the population of 1851 directly with the population of 1831, we find during that period of twenty years the numerical increase is 1,178,786. The increase per cent is 61 ; or, there were 1-61 persons in 1851 for 1 in 1831.

I leave you to consider these astounding revelations of the official records during the ensuing week, and remain

Yours truly,

FRANKLIN.

## ( No. 4. )

To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State, elect of the State of New-York:*

I showed you in my last letter, that while the population of the State increased only 61 per cent during the twenty years between 1831 and 1851, pauperism increased 706 per cent during the same period. This gives us a pretty clear idea of the rapidity with which pauperism is spreading amongst us, yet as our notions cannot be too precise or comprehensive, let us give the kaleidoscope another turn, and see if the same glass beads will not give us another image. Since the population of the State in 1831 was 1,918,608, and the number of persons relieved or supported during that year was 15,564, it follows that for every pauper in that year there were 123 non-paupers; or we may say that the burthen of supporting each pauper in the State was divided among 123 individuals. In 1841 the burthen was so far increased that there were only 39 persons to support each pauper, and in 1851 every 24 persons in the State were compelled to support one pauper.

I think, sir, we have gained something by this turn of the kaleidoscope. It seems to me that you, and I, and the public in general, will get a more vivid idea of the insidious activity of this social malady from this point of view than from any other. Keep the fact carefully in your memory, sir, that in 1831 there was one pauper to every *one hundred and twenty-three* inhabitants, while in 1851 there was one pauper to every *twenty four* inhabitants. Have you considered, that if pauperism increases as rapidly during the next twenty years as it has during the last twenty, there will be in 1871 one to every *five* inhabitants? If you have not, let me intreat you by all that is christian, all that is patriotic, and all that is philanthropic in you, to ponder it thoroughly now. Apply the most approved principles of political arithmetic to the solution of the problem, and tell us, if such should be the condition of things in 1871, what effect will it have on the condition of the country? If one person in every five is a pauper, will universal suffrage be safe! Will not the concentration of wealth



which such a condition of things will produce lead naturally and necessarily to the establishment of an order of *Nobility*? If an order of Nobility is established will they rest long without an *Emperor* or a *King*? If I read the Roman history rightly, the spirit of liberty declined as pauperism increased. Wealth, there, was more unequally divided; the rich became richer, and the poor poorer. The poor Roman was too happy to enrol himself among the retinue of the wealthy patrician, for then bread would be given him, and his water would be sure. But then, the maintenance of the Republic became impossible, and the establishment of the Empire was an inevitable necessity. You, sir are a statesman, and can better answer these questions than I can; yet it does seem to my poor understanding, that if like causes produce like effects, something like the sequence of events which occurred in Rome, will follow here.

While your hand is in will you be kind enough to solve a few more problems growing out of the same subject. What will be the effect of this increase of pauperism on our common schools? When wealth is confined to the very topmost branches of the national tree, while the roots and the trunk are steeped in poverty, and the inferior branches are contented with the most meagre gleanings of the vintage, will the wealthy contribute to the support of schools for the poor? Will they not deem them more fitting tools without education than with it? How will our churches be affected? Will not many a graceful spire which now rises heavenward crumble into decay? What influence will it exercise on internal improvements? Can a nation of lazaroni construct railroads and dig canals? What will become of our commerce? Do paupers build ships or fill them? Let Spain and Portugal and Naples answer.

You will perceive, sir, that I have only called your attention to such aspects of the question as a mere statesman would take. I am not afraid, however, that you will forget there is a christian, and a philanthropic side, which are of equal, if not superior interest. The individual pain and suffering and privation caused by poverty cannot be forgotten by any one possessed of the ordinary feelings of humanity; nor can the most painful tendency of ex-



treme poverty to alienate the affections from God and fasten them on merely sensual enjoyment, be overlooked by those who have learned the value of the soul, and delight in the extension of the Redeemer's Kingdom.

Although I am, I trust, in some degree sensible of the deep importance of these topics, yet I do not wish to dwell upon them. At present, I only seek to procure such reforms as it is in the power of statesmen to secure, and I know how intolerant *they* are, of any appeals to the feelings or the passions. It is only through the practical and the tangible that they can be moved, and knowing this I shall seek for no other instruments.

Yours truly,  
FRANKLIN.

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(No. 5.)

TO ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State elect, of the State of New-York*:

I have already drawn from official sources an aggregate of pauperism, which has probably awakened equally your astonishment and sympathy, but you are far from having the whole case before you. The number of persons relieved and supported in this State by private societies and individuals, are not numbered by tens, nor hundreds, but by thousands.

Almost all the different religious denominations contribute more or less to the support of their own members. With the Society of Friends this is a fundamental principle—none of their members are permitted to accept a charity from the public. Then there are the inmates of the numerous orphan asylums, the beneficiaries of the free masons, and other fraternal associations, and lastly those who are under the care of societies, which, under the various names of Dorcas, Relief, Assistance, &c., societies, dispense assistance to a very large number of persons in all our large, and in many of our smaller cities and villages.

It is impossible to estimate with any approximation to accuracy the number of persons relieved or supported through these agen-

cies, but if you desire to avail yourself of all the light attainable on the subject, there can be no doubt Mr. R. M. Hartley, of New-York, will gladly furnish you with all the reports of the "New-York Association for improving the condition of the poor," of which he is secretary, and those of the "New-York Female Assistance Society," to which he has ready access.

When you have studied their reports, together with those of the societies which are required by law to file their reports in the office of the Secretary of State, you will probably be prepared to admit, that the persons relieved or supported by private charity are very nearly equal to those supported at the expense of the public.

It not unfrequently happens that the same persons receive partial relief from public officers, and the agents of private associations; after making due allowance for such contingencies, it will be safe to assume that *one* person out of every *sixteen* in the State of New-York, requires and receives assistance from public or private bounty.

You may now suppose that you have got to the bottom of the matter, that at length you have taken the gauge and mensuration of all the poverty in the State. Be patient, my dear sir, you must grope deeper before you come to the bottom of the mystery of poverty. All that we have done heretofore has been to ascertain the number of those who *receive* assistance; we have yet to enquire how many there are who *need* assistance, but never receive it.

I cannot state the number of this class, but I know from personal investigations, that it is very large. They may be said to exist, rather than live; they procure money enough by picking up rags, bones, or old iron in the streets, or still worse, by petty pilfering, to keep their breath in their bodies, but are utter strangers to any of the decencies or comforts of life. In the city of Liverpool there are over 40,000 persons living in cellars. We have no statistics, that I am aware of, for the city of New-York, but there is no doubt that the number of persons residing in cellars is much greater than in Liverpool. I cannot give you a better idea of the miserable condition of the residents of these places, than by transcribing

the following description from Dr. Griscom's "Lecture on the sanitary condition of the poor." He says, "after describing the residences of the poor above ground, "But the most offensive of all places for residence, are the cellars. It is almost impossible, when contemplating the circumstances and condition of the poor beings who inhabit these places, to maintain the proper degree of calmness, requisite for a thorough inspection, and the exercise of a sound judgment respecting them. You must descend to them; you must feel the blast of foul air as it meets your face on opening the door; you must grope in the dark, or hesitate until your eye becomes accustomed to the gloomy place, to enable you to find your way through the entry, over a broken floor, the boards of which are protected from your tread by a half inch of hard dirt; you must inhale the suffocating vapor of the sitting and sleeping rooms; and in the dark damp recess, endeavor to find the inmates by the sound of their voices, or chance to see their figures moving between you and the flickering blaze of a shaving burning on the hearth, or the misty light of a window coated with dust and festooned with cobwebs. Or if in search of an invalid, take care that you do not fall full length upon the bed with her, by stumbling against the bundle of rags and straw, by that name, lying on the floor under a window, *if window there is*; all this and much more, beyond the reach of my pen, must be felt and seen, ere you can appreciate in its full force the mournful and disgusting condition in which many of our fellow citizens pass their lives." I have abundant materials on hand to illustrate the condition of the unassisted poor, but I will forbear, and will close this letter with asking you if I have not fully proved the assertion, that "pauperism is rapidly and dangerously increasing in the State of New-York."

Yours truly,

FRANKLIN.

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( No. 6. )

To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State*:

*II. The Expenses of Pauperism have greatly increased.*

This second proposition would seem naturally to follow from the first that we have been endeavoring to establish, viz: that



pauperism itself has greatly increased. Those who are willing to admit the first, will need little proof to admit the second. Nevertheless, it will make our way clear, and help us to arrive at some conclusions, to enter into some of the details of that increased expenditure. The total cost incurred by the tax payers of this State, during the year 1831, for the support or relief of paupers, was \$245,433.21; for the year 1841 it was \$538,709.44; and for the year 1851 it was \$857,866.91; for the year 1852 it was \$991,866.28.

I have stated in my third letter that the population of the State in 1831 was 1,918,608. In 1841 it was 2,428,921, and in 1851 it was 3,097,394. You will excuse me, sir, for this repetition, but you will please remember that these letters are intended for the public as well as for yourself, and that many will desire to know something of the objects on which their taxes are expended, who have not your facilities for consulting the statistics of the State.

From these statements it appears that the increased annual expense at the end of the ten years which expired in 1841, was \$293,276.23, or 119 per cent. The increase at the close of the next period of ten years ending in 1851, was \$319,157.47, or 59 per cent. If we compare the direct difference in the cost of pauperism in 1831 and 1851, we find that it is \$612,373.70, or 249 per cent, while, as we have seen in the third letter, the population had only increased 61 per cent.

I think, sir, this result is one which we should not have expected from any *a priori* reasoning; the country was far richer in 1851 than it was in 1831. The cost of the main articles of domestic consumption was less; the demand for labor was more various and more abundant, and it was better paid. Judging from these facts, we might suppose that pauperism would diminish rather than increase, and that the burdens of the tax payer would grow lighter rather than heavier; but the inexorable logic of facts completely overthrows such an inference, when we find that while in 1831 pauperism levied a tax of 12 cents and 7 mills on each person in the State, in 1851 it swelled to 27 cents and 7 mills on each person.



In view of these facts, it becomes unspeakably important to inquire how this great amount of pauperism, and its resulting taxation, may be diminished or totally abolished. In order to answer this inquiry satisfactorily we must ascertain, 1st. The causes of this remarkable increase of pauperism, and 2d. The abuses of the administration of the funds raised for the relief and support of the poor.

1. The causes of this remarkable increase of pauperism.

*First*—Strange as it may appear, one of the most prolific causes of this increase is the extraordinary increase of knowledge, and its application to the ordinary objects and purposes of life. New discoveries are daily made in the mechanical and the chemical arts, which supercede mere brute force—mere muscular and unintelligent exertion. Steam, wind and water, have almost infinitely augmented the sources of physical power, and have driven those laborers who have nothing but the strength of their bodies to sell, almost out of the market. Allow me to call your attention to one or two illustrations of this remark. It is within the memory of those now living, when there was no such thing as a steam engine known. A large proportion of the work now performed by steam engines was then performed by men. It would take 40,000 men to draw up as many coals through the shaft of a mine, as a single engine of the size of that on board of the steamboat Isaac Newton. Now, if a single steam engine will dispense with so many men, what must be the number of those who have lost a market for their labor by the combined action of all the engines now in operation.

It is not very long since all the grain raised in this State was threshed out with flails. It requires no intellect whatever to perform this labor; any one, not a perfect idiot, can stand and pound upon the floor of a barn. This employment was usually relied on by laborers for their winter's employment. Now there is scarcely a farmer to be found who threshes with a flail. Threshing machines are everywhere used, and have completely cut off this source of winter employment. I will not extend these illustrations; but I hope, sir, that you will not stop where I do.

Spend some time in thinking of the various ways in which mere unintelligent labor has been superseded within the circle of your own experience by new discoveries in the arts, and you will see how much significance there is in this view of the case.

I do not assert, nor do I believe that the actual amount of labor, or rather employment, is diminished by labor saving machines. Such machines must be constructed and attended by intelligent men; the labor they require is that of the brain, rather than of the muscles. Unfortunately, there is a very large class who have no intelligence, and who are incapable of doing anything where knowledge or ingenuity is required. It is this class who are cut off from labor by the new inventions in the arts.

Yours truly,

FRANKLIN.

(No. 7.)

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State elect, of the State of New York:*

*Second*.—The next cause for the increase of pauperism amongst us to which I wish to advert is the increase of our foreign population. The increase of the burthen which is cast upon the taxpayers is really most extraordinary, if not alarming, as will appear from the following table taken from the records of the department of State of the State of New York:

	Whole No. relieved or supported.	Of these were Foreigners.	Per cent of Foreigners.
In 1845,.....	74,800	8,015	10.7
1846,.....	98,423	8,678	8.8
1850,.....	114,891	25,752	22.4
1851,.....	125,473	38,507	30.7
1852,.....	151,399	37,694	24.9

I have reason to believe that in the return from the superintendents of the county poor the number of foreign paupers is very much underrated. Many of those who are naturalized are returned as natives, and the children of foreigners are also in many cases set down as natives. According to the United States

census for 1850, foreigners constituted 26.6 per cent of all the paupers in the country.

*Third*—The increase of intemperance is another source of pauperism. The returns from the different poor houses in this State in relation to this subject are perfectly frightful. In 1846 intemperance conveyed 6,685 persons to the poor house. In 1847, 8,566 persons. In 1849, 15,712 persons. The increase of pauperism consequent on intemperance between 1846 and 1847 was 27 per cent., and from 1846 to 1849 it was 134 per cent. ! In the year 1851, 13,189 cases of pauperism were caused by intemperance, and in 1852, 18,350 arose from the same source. These facts you will recollect apply exclusively to our own State.

That you may be assured that the very remarkable relation indicated above between pauperism and intemperance is not accidental or confined to the State of New-York, I give you facts from other States which confirm this relation in the most ample manner. I have before me a report by a committee of the Legislature of Connecticut made in 1852 on the condition of pauperism in that State. Answers to their interrogatories more or less complete were received from 133 towns—from 15 towns no reports were received. In these towns 3,680 persons were partially or wholly supported during the preceding year. In 130 towns 972 persons, receiving partial or entire support, were reduced to poverty through intemperance. The committee say: "This number is not intended to include any part of that class who may have been reduced to their unfortunate condition through the cause of intemperance, either directly or indirectly, but only such as are themselves habitually intemperate."—The New-York reports show that the proportion between the number of persons reduced to pauperism in consequence of the intemperance of their husbands, fathers, or other care-takers, is as 2 of the former to 1 of the latter. If the same ratio obtains in Connecticut 1,458 or 39 per cent. of the whole number owed their poverty directly or indirectly to intemperance.

From the poor-law returns of the State of Massachusetts for 1850 we learn that the number of persons relieved or supported was 25,981, of which number 14,674 or 56 per cent. became pauper—

[Senate, No. 72.]



pers through intemperance. In 1852, out of 27,624 relieved or supported, 16,853 or 61 per cent. were reduced to poverty in consequence of intemperance.

I regret that I am unable to lay before you any further reliable statistics calculated to cast light upon this very interesting subject of investigation, but there can scarcely be a doubt on your mind that intemperance is really one of the most fertile causes of pauperism in existence. I have visited a great many alms houses in various States of the Union, and have made very minute and careful inquiries in relation to intemperance, and from all that I have seen and heard its influence is decidedly underrated in the official returns, especially in our own State. The causes of pauperism are not given in from one-half to one-third of the cases, and those where the causes are given they are not the result of careful examination on the part of the keeper, but merely the record of the pauper's own story. These statements, therefore, so far as they go only show how many of the paupers acknowledged themselves to have become so through intemperance. Those who are accustomed to visit our poor-houses know that many who become inmates through the grossest intemperance will stoutly deny that they were drunkards.

*Fourth*—The next cause of the increase of pauperism is the increasing prevalence of licentiousness. I am provided with ample details and proofs of this assertion, but they would be better adapted to a private than a public letter. I embrace this among the enumeration here, because I believe that legislation may do much for the suppression of vice, and I cannot consistently with my sense of duty, conceal from the public eye any of the causes of pauperism which it is in the power of public servants to diminish or totally suppress. I trust, sir, you will not deem it improper for me to state that within the last four weeks I have been solicited to purchase books by itinerant venders who frequent our steamboats and railroad cars. When I have refused to purchase the seller has, in five different instances, turned up the corner of a leaf and exhibited an obscene picture as an inducement to buy, with an assurance that there was "more of the same sort in the volume." Judging from the frequency with



which these wretched volumes have been offered to me I should infer that they were frequently sold, and exercised, of course, a most pernicious influence on the community.

*Fifth*—Gambling is a very common source of poverty, especially lottery gambling. The laws are certainly very stringent against it, but they are quite inefficient. Dealers certainly do not advertise them, nor openly exhibit their signs, nevertheless immense numbers are sold, and chiefly to the laboring poor. I could tell you many a heart-rending story of families reduced to beggary and disgrace through the pernicious habit of lottery gambling.

*Sixth*—The condition of the poor in our large cities inevitably tends to increase pauperism.

The children of the poor in our large cities are born and reared in filthy cellars, crowded and ill-ventilated apartments—fed on ill-cooked and indigestible food—the sexes mingled indiscriminately, without access to any sources of instruction or amusement. They grow up with every physiological and moral cause in vigorous operation which is calculated to repress the desire and ability to procure a decent living. You can scarcely conceive, sir, living as you do in your elegant mansion at Syracuse, surrounded by every comfort and every luxury which art can contrive and wealth can purchase—I say, sir, you can hardly *conceive* of the miserable condition in which these poor creatures live. There is hardly a pig-sty in the county of Onondaga that is not preferable as a habitation to those inhabited by thousands of poor persons in the cities of this State. I have no wish to lay bare the revolting scenes of misery and degradation that I have witnessed in my visits to these dwellings, yet you will perhaps allow me to give one case as a sample which at this moment occurs to me. It was at the Old Brewery, so celebrated in the annals of the Five Points in the city of New-York, a place which, thanks to the Christian and self-denying labors of the Rev. L. M. Pease, has been purged of its pollution, but which at the time I speak of was a most terrible libel upon the Christianity and civilization of the city of New-York. I think there were *eighty-six* families crowded into that old rookery. It might stand as a live-

ly symbol of the abomination of desolation. All the rooms without exception were as dirty as filth could make them; in all the stench was intolerable, and all were alive with vermin. In one of the apartments there were four families, each occupying a separate corner, and each having a right to a certain defined space of neutral ground around the fire-place. In one corner lay a woman in the last stages of fever; she was entirely naked. She was provided with neither bed nor straw, but lay on carpenter's shavings. Her husband could neither provide any of the articles which were required for either decency or comfort, but before I left he had contrived to get some gin for her, the real "blue ruin," and poured it down her throat. In another corner was a family where there were half a dozen children. One of them came in with a bag slung over his shoulder, which he at once emptied on the floor, (which, by the way, was covered with at least half an inch of dirt.) The bag contained bones with a little meat adhering to them, yet the children seized upon them as though they were the most delicious morsels, and gnawed them as ravenously as though they had been a pack of wolves. I asked one of these hopeful children if he knew there was a God? He scratched his head with a very doubtful expression, but at length he replied that he did. I then asked him what he knew about God. All his hesitation of manner had vanished now, and he answered with great promptness, "Well, he damns folks, sir!" It was evident that all he knew of Deity was from those who profaned his name.

It is almost impossible, sir, for a child brought up in this way to rise in the world, or become anything else but a pauper. They are almost invariably tainted with scrofula which unfits them for labor, and their brutal ignorance equally unfits them for other avocations. Nor do they care much for any other position. All sentiments of ambition are effectually crushed within them, and they are contented to live as they were born, and die as they have lived, without hope or expectation of improvement. Every one of these children grows up to be fathers of another generation of paupers, and in this way pauperism rapidly increases by natural propagation. Were there no other causes, this alone would cause

pauperism to increase faster than the population. I do not give these details to awaken emotions of pity—this is no part of my plan. I only wish to detail plain sober facts with which I think yourself and the people should be familiar. I should not have drawn the veil from the scenes of wretchedness, did I not think it was necessary to reveal them in order that you might perceive the necessity of those plans of remedial legislation which it is my intention to propose in subsequent letters.

Yours, truly,

FRANKLIN.

( No. 8. )

To the HON. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State elect of the State of New-York:*

*Seventh*—Another cause of the increase of pauperism arises from the neglect of the proper officers to give a suitable education to the children born and brought up in our poor-houses.

The number of children under 16 years in the poor-houses of the State was, in

	Males.	Females.	Total.	No. instructed during the year.	Time of instruction.
1849, . . . . .	1,120	1,755	2,875	2,639	8 months.
1850, . . . . .	1,275	1,960	3,235	2,635	7½ do
1851, . . . . .	1,152	1,976	3,128	2,849	8½ do
1852, . . . . .	1,155	1,992	3,147	3,147	8 do

The returns look fair enough on their face, with respect to instruction; it would seem that the children in these establishments enjoy better educational privileges than the children of farmers in most of the rural districts of the State.

I have ascertained, however, from personal investigation, that there is no reality in all this, as you may also ascertain, if you will take the trouble to examine for yourself. I really don't know what meaning the county superintendents of the poor attach to the word *Education*; I know they sometimes use words in a sense not warranted by any Dictionary that ever I consulted. But if they mean anything which elevates the mind—anything which



ministers to the moral feelings or the intellectual powers—anything which will help to get a living, or to discharge intelligently the duties incident to citizenship—there is no such thing given to the youth in our county houses. I have visited many of the poor-houses myself, and have obtained authentic information by correspondence, from many others, and from all this I think I am warranted in saying that out of the 3,000 children sheltered in them, only a very small fraction, a mere drop in the bucket, obtain an education that will be of the slightest use to them in getting a living, or in making useful members of society. In many cases the teacher is a pauper, generally an old drunkard, whose temper is soured and whose intellect is debased, and who spends the school hours in tormenting, rather than in teaching his pupils. In many of these schools there is no book except the Testament to be found, no slates, pens or paper. In some counties not a dollar has been expended in text books or stationery since the county system has been adopted. Under such circumstances the name of school is a mere farce.

There are between five and six hundred children bound out every year from the poor-houses under the authority of the superintendents of the poor.

	No. bound out.
In the year 1848,.....	306
do 1849,.....	601
do 1850,.....	848
do 1851,.....	972
do 1852,... ..	873

There is always a stipulation in the indentures for a certain amount of education for each child, or, more properly, that the child should have a certain number of months' schooling during each year of its apprenticeship. It is of course impossible for a private person like myself to acquire accurate information in relation to the fidelity with which this stipulation is fulfilled. What I could do I have done. I have made personal inquiries of the superintendents of many counties, and have sought information extensively by correspondence. I do not recollect more than two or three who had ever made a single inquiry on the subject, or who knew whether the children so bound out were sent to



school or not, and in these few cases there was no pretence that the inquiries had been systematic or thorough. I have found many children bound out by the superintendents who never received one hour's education during their apprenticeship, and who, at the age of twenty-one, were cast loose on the world no better than the heathen. How can children brought up in this way be expected to become anything else than criminals or paupers, and the fathers and mothers of criminals and paupers? They have no ambition to acquire property, and if they had, they have no means to acquire it. They cannot enter into trade, because in order to do this with any success they must be able to read, write and cypher, and this they cannot do. We have shown before that the mere laborer, who has nothing but bodily strength to sell in the market, cannot save anything from his wages, his pay is too small, and his employment too precarious to permit it, and every year adds to this precariousness. A single seed of Canada thistle planted in a field will bear a full sized plant, which, in its turn will bear seeds from which new plants will spring, and thus a field, once fertile, will become filled with these noxious plants. Just so with the 3,000 children in our poor-houses, and with the 600 who are annually bound out. Each one of these is a seed of pauperism, which will bear plants that will again bear seed, and in time will overrun the State with a burden of pauperism and crime, which it will be utterly unable to bear. This is a cause of the increase of pauperism, which is plain and tangible, and which can be understood by every one; I therefore commend it to your most serious consideration.

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(No. 9.)

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State elect of the State of New-York :*

*Eighth.*—The increasing prevalence of insanity is a fruitful cause of the increase of pauperism. The number of pauper lunatics in this State for the last five years, is given in the following table :

	Lunatics.	Idiots.
1848,.....	698	319
1849,.....	1,036	297
1850,.....	1,121	297
1851,.....	1,103	230
1852,.....	1,522	461

I do not know that it is possible for the increase of insanity to be checked by legislation, but its power to increase pauperism may be very greatly diminished. You know, sir, that insanity is one of the most curable of diseases, if submitted to treatment in its earliest stages; but the most incurable, if neglected for any considerable time after its commencement. The result of a most ample experience on this subject you will find detailed in Dr. Earle's History and Statistics of Bloomingdale Asylum, and the volumes of the Journal of Insanity. Many of the insane paupers in our poor houses have been there for years, and will probably remain there for life. Had they been sent to an asylum at the first outbreak of the disorder, they might in a great majority of cases have been cured in a few months, and, instead of swelling the catalogue of our paupers, they would now be earning their own living. From the report of Thomas R. Hazard, alluded to in a former letter, I take the following statement: "By the statistics contained in this report, it may be seen that the average time that ten of the insane paupers now at their asylum (poor house) have been maintained by the town of Newport, is more than 25 years—thus showing that the town has been put to a charge for the support of ten persons only, of probably not less than \$12,000.00. Now, there can be but little doubt that a large proportion of these cases would have early recovered, had the subject of them be sent to a good curative hospital, in the *very* earliest stages of their malady." This statement brings to my mind a case of an insane pauper, that I saw in the Newport poor house above mentioned, in the summer of 1851. He was cast in a gigantic mould, and his strength corresponded with his stature. Coarse in his feelings, and his appetites his great glory,—the highest aim of his existence was to *whip* every one with whom he came in contact, and he generally did whip them. Being naturally quarrelsome and ill-natured, he was a nuisance in the town where he lived—a perfect pest of society. At length this Goliath met with a David who overcame him. He insulted a little wry fellow, who resented the insult, and was not at all cast down or intimidated by the appearance of his burly antagonist. They fought, and Goliath was thoroughly beaten,—threshed within an inch of his life, and compelled to slink away like a dog detected

in sheep stealing. I do not know whether it was in consequence of mortification at his defeat by so insignificant an opponent, or of blows on the head received during the combat, but he immediately became insane and was removed to the poor house.

I have visited some of the lunatic asylums of our country, again and again, and supposed I was pretty familiar with every phase of insanity, but, when I saw this man, I felt that I knew nothing about the matter. Such continuous hyena-like fury as I saw in him, I did not suppose could possibly exist in anything wearing the lineaments of a man. It was more safe to enter the den of a lion or a tiger, than to enter his den; his screams were constant and frightful, and the blows which he struck against the side of his apartment were tremendous; sometimes he would inflict blows on his own forehead for half an hour together, so violent you wondered that the skull was not cracked; in fact there was a tough callous raised on his forehead nearly an inch thick, in consequence of them. The authorities were humane men, and rather than keep him chained, they built a cage of timbers some thirty feet by twenty, in which he might safely take air, and exercise, and sunshine. Yet everything human seemed entirely extinguished within him; nothing but the brute remained. Well, sir, when the Butler asylum was organized in Rhode Island, this apparently hopeless case was sent there, I believe through the intervention of Miss Dix, and, astonishing to relate, after a residence there of about a year, he was cured! The order, the quiet, the humane feelings which permeate the whole atmosphere of the place, had worked a wondrous change in his whole nature. When he returned to society he was a vastly better man, and now earns a comfortable living, and is a respectable member of society. If there was hope for him, there is hope for all. Our laws are good enough upon this point. They contain ample provision for trying the benefit of a good asylum for every recent case of insanity among the poor, but the difficulty is, the superintendents of the poor do not avail themselves of its provisions. At least \$100,000 are annually expended in this State for the support of the insane poor. I am confident \$60,000 might be annually saved to the tax payers, if the county superintendents would act in accordance with the spirit of the law. In looking over what I have written,



I find, to use the lawyer's phrase, my proof does not exactly sustain my declaration. Let me, therefore, avail myself of the provisions of the New Code and amend it, so that both may correspond, and state as the 8th cause of the increase of pauperism, the neglect of the county superintendents to avail themselves of the curative means provided by law for the insane poor, and by such neglect they increase the number of paupers. If you can procure any improvement in this matter, you will enrol yourself in the rank of a great public benefactor.

Yours, &c.,

FRANKLIN.

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(No. 10.)

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State of the State of New York:*

*Ninth*—Indiscriminate private alms-giving is a frightful source of the increase of pauperism.

I have already called your attention to the report of the New-York Society for improving the condition of the poor. You will find in these most full and ample details on this subject, and however much this proposition may be opposed to your preconceived ideas, I think you will acknowledge that these reports fully *demonstrate* that indiscriminate alms-giving increases pauperism. There is a class of men and women, too, to whom the exercise of any faculty requiring a firm will and a decided purpose is perfectly intolerable; they will do anything, and suffer anything, rather than form a plan of action, and adhere perseveringly to it. It is a large class, much larger than most people are aware of. They are "waiters on Providence," to borrow a phrase from Cromwellian times. They are always waiting for something to turn up, as we are told by Mr. Dickens. Such people will work rather than starve, but give them the least encouragement—let them get the least glimpse of a chance of access to the fountains of charity, and they bid farewell to labor at once and forever. You and I, sir, would greatly prefer to shoulder our pick-axes and work on a railroad, till our sinews cracked, than stand all day in the streets of a city exposed to all weathers, and mutely

beg with outstretched hand as some do, or with a canting whine, as do others. But this class of men really do enjoy it. They are contented to live on the industry of others all their days, and to bequeath the trade of beggary to their children after them. It is very common for them to spend the pleasant season of summer in the streets of our large cities, where they can procure enough by begging during the day to procure the means of feasting and revelry for the night. When winter comes they quietly transfer themselves to the county house, there to remain until the first fine days of spring allure them to their wonted haunts. This system of private alms-giving tends to foster pauperism. By weakening the principle of frugality, the encouragement of early and thoughtless marriages; the bringing up of children with examples of indolence and inactivity continually before their eyes, and habituating them to hypocrisy, lying and carelessness, weakening the natural dependence and affection of parent, children and other relatives. A child brought up in this way really *cannot* get a living--they cannot even *try*; they would no more think of making the effort than they would think of climbing upwards to the moon. This is no exaggerated language; it is the sober statement of simple truth. We may form some idea of the advantage to be derived from the abolition of private alms-giving by what resulted in England from the enactment of the new poor law in 1834. Under the old system out-door relief was extended to the able-bodied paupers by the parish officers. By the new law all relief was refused to the able-bodied except within the walls of the work-house. The evils of partial relief by parish officers are not as great as those arising from private bounty, because these officers enjoy facilities for detecting imposture which private persons cannot pretend to. Mr. Porter's "Progress of the Nation," vol. 2, p. 369, says, this law "has had the effect, for the extent of which it is difficult fully to account, in converting the idle to habits of industry." A letter written by Mr. Woolly to Mr. Gueson, one of the assistant Poor Law Commissioners, says, in speaking of this abolition of out-door relief to the able-bodied, "I wanted to talk to you on the almost magical effect I find produced by the new poor-laws in the South."

\* \* \* "The change has been made, and the effect is more

than any one could have hoped." \* \* \* "I have seen the effect on the poor-rates, the character of the population, the improvement of the land--such a change! I have talked with all sorts of persons, of all sorts of opinions on other subjects, and have heard but *one* opinion on this--that the measure has saved the country. Let every man see the straight-forward walk, the upright look of the laborer, as contrasted with what was before seen at every step in those counties. The sturdy and idle nuisance has already become the useful and industrious member of society. No man who has not looked well into human nature, and the practical working of the wretched system of pauperism, can form an idea how different is sixpence earned by honest industry and sixpence wrung from the pay-table of a parish officer. I am fully convinced that the measure has doubled the value of property in many parts of the kingdom. This is important; but pounds, shillings and pence will not measure the value of the change in character which is already visible, and which I am well convinced will develope itself more and more."

Such are the results of English experience, and I have no doubt if means could be found to arrest begging and private alms-giving, greater benefits than even these would follow in this country. There is no doubt that it can be done if the popular will is brought strongly to bear upon it. Count Ramford effected it perfectly in Bavaria, with great pecuniary saving to the public, and great amelioration of the condition of the poor, and what he could effect in that country, is surely not beyond our power, if we steadily apply our energies to effect it.

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( No. 11. )

*Tenth*—Pauperism is increased by the change which has taken place in the habits and feelings of the poor.

By this, I mean that the poor are less independent than they were twenty years ago. They are more inclined to calculate systematically on relief from the public chest. In 1831 there was a



strong repugnance on the part of the poor to go to the County house, or to accept public relief in any form. It was astonishing to see what suffering they would undergo, rather than become a public charge, and it was no less astonishing to witness the extent to which they carried the science of frugality. They struggled hard and perseveringly to acquire a little, and that little they contrived should supply them with a great many necessities. They knew how to mend, and darn, and turn their clothes, and when all this had been done to its utmost extent, they contrived to alter them so that they would answer for their children; when these in their turn had worn them until all the resources of patching, mending, and turning, were exhausted, they would cut them into carpet rags and sell them, and thus make them contribute to the purchase of a new suit. In the spring they would dig dandelions and gather water cresses, in the summer gather berries, in the fall nuts, and in winter they would knit stockings, make toy brooms, or do anything whatever to earn a six-pence. "Every cat was made to catch a rat, and every kitten a mouse." Things have greatly changed now. I do not mean that this feeling of independence has utterly deserted *every* poor person—Heaven forbid that I should be guilty of such indiscriminate slander. I know there are those who would never cast themselves on the public bounty until every personal resource was utterly exhausted. But it is of the poor in the aggregate that I speak—of the class—and of the class, the remarks are but too true. They are more wasteful now, they have less forecast, less sense of shame in living on the public. If they have plenty to-day, they will live riotously, forgetful that they have no assurance of a supply for the morrow; and, when that morrow's sun rises upon them without provision for its necessities, they feel no contrition that what was wasted yesterday would have been ample for the supply of to-day. They have no shame in going out to beg—they will whine and grovel before those from whom they expect relief, and if they are unsuccessful, will feign sickness, that they may have an order from the poor-master.

The lack of proper independence of feeling is strikingly exemplified in the conversations of the poor in our County Houses. It

is not uncommon to hear them discussing the merits of the Poor Houses in different parts of the State, just as fashionable travelers discuss the merits of the Ocean House at Newport, or the United States at Saratoga. At this house, there are poor accommodations—nothing is to be got but mush and potatoes—they would never recommend a friend to stop at such a place. At another, they make you work, and this cannot be endured. At another, the fare is pretty good, but then, they give you no tobacco. Such a place is first rate ; the pork is fat, the beef is tender, and then you get plenty of cabbage and onions, and have nothing to do. I once heard a pauper praising one of our County Houses in the most enthusiastic terms ; it had all the above enumerated advantages, and more to boot ; it was in the vicinity of a tavern and a blacksmith's shops ; the paupers could get money enough at these places, by holding horses, and such odd jobs, to keep them half drunk the whole time. This came nearer to a heaven upon earth than anything he had ever heard of ; and he informed me, when spring came, and traveling was pleasant, he meant to go back and end his days there. All this was told me in the most business-like manner imaginable, and without the slightest consciousness on his part that there was anything odd or improper in what he was saying. They look upon County Houses as places of rest and repose, intended to shield them from effort and labor, and they can see no reason why they should not avail themselves of their comforts without scruple, as often and as for long as it suits their convenience. This is not so much a cause of pauperism as it is a result of other causes. The great increase of foreign pauperism has had much to do with it, they have leavened our native poor with their own shiftless and dependent feelings. Private alms-giving, and the careless granting of permits to the County House by the poor master, has had a bad influence, by holding out a temptation to lean on the public rather than on themselves. Formerly, the poor masters were obliged to get an order from a justice, before they could send a pauper to the County House, and the repeal of that law, which now allows the poor masters to send people of their own accord to the County House, has done much to increase the evil. I now bring the enumeration of the causes which have increased, and are still increasing pauperism amongst us, to a close.

There are yet others, perhaps more deeply radicated in human nature than any that I have mentioned, but their discussion would lead us into metaphysical speculations, which I desire, if possible, to avoid. My object has been to state nothing that is not susceptible of proof, and to draw no inferences but such as minds untrained to the subtleties of reasoning may understand. If I am successful in my aim, I trust the public mind will be so operated on that you will find allies on every hand to aid you in the effort for reform, which I trust you will feel it your duty to put forth.

Yours, &c.,

FRANKLIN.

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( No. 12. )

To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State of the State of New-York:*

II. We are now prepared to enter into the second branch of our inquiry, viz: *What abuses exist in the administration of our Poor Laws?* We shall then enter upon the consideration of the remedies to be applied.

*First.* It seems to me that the very great discrepancies in the cost of supporting the poor in different counties, indicates a very great mismanagement in some of them. Just compare the average weekly cost of supporting each pauper in the following parallel columns and note the contrast. The cost stated is an average of six years :

County of	Average weekly cost per head.	County of	Average weekly cost per head.
Putnam,.....	27 cts. 3 m.	Lewis, .....	60 cts. 6 m.
Orange, .....	40 " 9 "	Herkimer,.....	70 " 3 "
Columbia, .....	49 " 6 "	Dutchess,.....	66 " 4 "
Albany, .....	61 " 2 "	Rensselaer, ....	82 " 8 "
Tompkins,.....	49 " 7 "	Cortland, .....	59 " 6 "
Washington, ....	50 " 5 "	Saratoga, .....	66 " 1 "

It is difficult to account for this wide difference in the expenses of supporting paupers in these counties, except that the superintendents are either incompetent or dishonest. Putnam county is



near New-York, the roads are rough and steep, and there is every natural reason why living there should cost as much or more than it does in Lewis county, which is farther from market, more fertile in soil, and where everything conspires to make living cheap, yet it costs 42 cents 3 mills more per week to support a pauper in the former than in the latter. Just so it is with Orange and Herkimer. Why should a pauper cost 29 cents 4 mills more per week in the one than in the other. Dutchess and Columbia are adjoining counties and the expenses of living are as nearly alike in both as possible, yet it costs sixteen cents 4 mills more to support a Dutchess county pauper than it does a Columbia county pauper.

I have visited the poor houses in both Albany and Rensselaer counties, and I am sure that the paupers live quite as comfortably in Albany as they do in Rensselaer, while Albany takes better care of the sick and has more of them than Rensselaer, but the latter pays 20 cents and 8 mills per head more than the former. I have visited many of the poor houses in the State making minute inquiries in regard to the management of them, and have carefully sought for information about others which I have not visited by correspondence and by interviews with members of the Legislature. I cannot doubt that the main cause of the mal-administration of the poor fund, is the unfitness of the men selected to administer them. You understand party tactics as well as most men. You understand how nominating conventions are got together and how they are managed, and knowing this, you will not be surprised that unfit men are selected for county superintendents of the poor. Sometimes there are two or three candidates for sheriff or member of Assembly. Unfortunately only one can receive the nomination, but if the defeated candidates go away with sore heads, they may defeat the election. They have influence, are good electioneers, and have power to damage the party seriously if they are so disposed. To prevent this they are nominated for something else, and more likely than otherwise, this something else, will be superintendent of the poor. This office is not sought for by men who wish to exercise its powers and duties for the welfare of the unfortunate objects committed to their care, or for the advantage of the tax-payers; these are the very

last things they think of. Their object is to make money—this is the sum and substance of the matter. Nor is the question of the special fitness of the candidates taken into consideration by nominating conventions. The sole question there, is, how many votes will he control? and how will his nomination affect other portions of the ticket? Now since this is notoriously the case, how can any one expect that fit men will be chosen. If you or any other gentlemen have occasion to employ a clerk in your own private business, you do not enquire into his capacity for hunting muskrats, or making chowder, or into any qualification he may possess for matters which have no relation whatever to the business you design to employ him in. You seek to know if he writes a legible hand—if he is expert in accounts—if he is honest, and if he is well fitted in all respects for his occupation. After you have fully ascertained all this, you may reasonably expect that your man will suit you. But you would not expect to have a good clerk if you took no pains to test his capabilities beforehand. It is exactly so with superintendents of the poor. We do not select men on account of their qualifications; in fact they are often selected for their disqualifications, and therefore there can be no surprise, if they turn out to be disqualified.

In general one of the superintendents is a country merchant and two are farmers. The purchasing of the supplies is generally divided among them thus: The merchant supplies the fish and groceries and clothing; one of the farmers supplies the meat, and the other the miscellaneous articles. The merchant furnishes his portion from his own store, at the highest retail prices, charging for the very wrapper and twine in which the goods are enveloped. The more he supplies the greater will be his profit. Since a prodigal use of the supplies enhanced his profits, he cannot be expected to labor very zealously to restrain waste and extravagance on the part of the keeper.

The farmer who supplies the meat, purchases a lot of cattle fat and lean together and has them charged to himself at so much per head. He takes two bills. The fat cattle are placed in one bill, and the lean ones in the other. The one is made out in his private name, the other of the thin ones, in his official name. Sup-

pose a lot of cattle of 40 head is worth from \$10 to \$20 each ; to the seller it makes no difference whether they are sold at so much each head within these limits, or whether the price is averaged at \$15 per head. The sum received by him is the same in either case ; he gets \$800, no more nor less. But it makes a great difference to the county, for it pays \$400 for cattle that are only worth \$200, and the superintendent pays only \$400 for cattle that are worth \$600, making \$200 profit out of the county by the transaction. I have been informed of this mode of dealing in so many counties that I am led to believe the practice is a very common one. The superintendent charged with the purchase of the supplies, manages in the same way, and "feathers his nest" by the same method. Hence, though their vouchers are perfectly regular, the county pays much more for each article than it is really worth. The whole thing is reduced to a regular system in most of the counties of the State, and there is no one officially charged with the investigation of their management except a committee of the board of supervisors, who are not accountants by profession, and usually are incapable of detecting the errors in artfully contrived accounts, and therefore they escape detection. Undoubtedly there are many honorable exceptions to the rule. Among our superintendents, some of them are I know as high-minded and honorable men as the State affords, but they are the exceptions. I do not pretend to enumerate all the modes by which the county is defrauded, but what I have already stated will suffice to convince you that a radical reform is imperatively demanded.

FRANKLIN.

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(No. 13.)

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State of the State of New-York :*

*Second*—The architectural design and mechanical structure of poor houses is very bad ; I scarcely think I should be guilty of exaggeration if I say it is as bad as it can be.

Every one knows the difference in the expense of supporting even a small family in a convenient and well arranged house, and one that is inconvenient ; twice as many steps must be taken to do the same work ; much time is lost in looking for things mis-



laid, as they are sure to be when no uniform place is provided for them; an ill contrived house is an obstacle to order, system and comfort. If this be so in a *small* family, how greatly must the rates of trouble and expense be increased when the family consists of *hundreds*.

I have not seen all the poor houses in the State, but I have seen many of them, and I can most truly declare that I have never seen a well contrived building among them all. The almshouse in the city of New-York is the only one that has anything like plan or design about it, and that is planned very badly; the water closets alone, I have been informed on good authority, cost \$40,000, and they are perfect nuisances after all; better ones could have been built for \$400. This building was erected by the common council and the old commissioners of the almshouse. Things are managed better under the Ten Governors. You will probably make an official visit to Blackwell's Island this summer. When there, let me beg you to compare the almshouse and the workhouse erected by the Ten Governors, and note the superior conveniences of the latter establishment. You will find that all possible wants of the inmates have been foreseen and provided for; a place is arranged for everything; the rooms between which there will be the most intercourse are placed contiguous to each other; all the rooms may be easily and conveniently inspected by the officers, and those requiring the most careful oversight are the most conveniently overlooked. This superior arrangement, you will easily see, will be productive of great economy in supporting the establishment. After visiting the New-York Workhouse you will do well to go through the Rensselaer county Poor-house, and you will then understand better than I can tell you how much is lost to the tax-payers of the State in consequence of the malconstruction of the poor-houses.

There are other things to be thought of in building a house besides mere convenience. Durability, warming and ventilating are questions which very much affect the economy of the institution. There is much of sham building to be seen in the State, but in none is there so much unmitigated sham as in the county houses. It would appear that the sole object of the contrivers was to get anything in the shape of a building, at the least possi-

ble cost, without knowing or caring whether it was fit for the purpose intended or not. These miserable shells take twice as much fuel to warm them as they would if they were thoroughly built, and every year they require appropriations for repairs, which form a large percentage on the original cost; they are thus very expensive, and never answer the purpose. Very few of the poor-houses are furnished with scientific and economical apparatus for warming. Usually the old stoves are retained, which consume enormous quantities of fuel, roasting those in their immediate neighborhood, while those at a little distance are freezing. Much fuel is wanted, and nobody is comfortable. In the year 1851 an improved mode of heating and ventilating by steam was introduced into the Philadelphia almshouse; there was a saving of 30 per cent in fuel the first year; 30 per cent on the fuel consumed in the poor-house of this State would amount to no inconsiderable sum, and would be a great relief to tax-payers. As for ventilation, the thing is not thought of, as you will be assured most feelingly if you visit them. The dormitories early in the morning are dreadfully nauseous; I have often been surprised when I have smelled them, that they are not visited by the most malignant forms of pestilence. I have spoken of the saving of fuel by the new plan of heating in the Philadelphia almshouse; I ought to add that ventilation of the most perfect kind is effected by the apparatus as well as heating. The air is now as sweet at midnight in the dormitories and hospitals as it is at mid-day.

If you will support the poor with economy, convenient and well planned buildings must be erected. They must be strong and durable, and the most scientific plans for warming and ventilating must be introduced. But it must be understood by boards of supervisors that these things will cost money; nothing should be spent in decoration, but they should not hesitate to appropriate a sum which shall be *ample* to secure these objects, and a very different class of men from those who generally fill the office of county superintendents of the poor must be elected or the appropriation will be pretty sure to be wasted.

Very truly yours,

FRANKLIN.

## (No. 14.)

To the HON. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State of the State of New-York*:

*Third*—Great loss arises from our ignorance of the true laws of diet, and the most economical methods of preparing and cooking food.

These letters have already been extended to a much greater length than I expected when I began to write them, and I am greatly oppressed with a fear that you will grow weary of the details embraced in them, and refuse to bestow on them any further attention, but I must beg you to have patience yet a little longer. The interests of vast numbers of paupers and tax payers are involved in the questions discussed, and I feel so fully satisfied that the measures of reform which I shall have the honor to propose for your consideration will be productive of great benefit to both these classes, that I am exceedingly anxious to put you in full possession of all the evils which that plan is calculated to remedy.

Unless you have paid more attention to questions connected with food and diet than most men, you will be surprised at the subject of this letter. You will no doubt think that the cheapest mode of feeding the poor and the best modes of cooking their food is as well settled as the laws of gravitation. This is far from being the case. On the contrary, the whole subject lies in as deep, though I trust not in as hopeless, obscurity as the discovery of the longitude or the quadrature of the circle. I have consulted every authority I have had access to—written, printed and verbal—but I have never yet met with any decisive experiment on the relative nutritive values of beef, pork and mutton, in any book or manuscript whatever. Supposing such questions could not have been overlooked at the army and navy departments, I made personal application to the gentlemen presiding over them, but was told that they knew of no experiments whatever; and, in fact, until I made the inquiry, they had never given a single thought to the subject. The question to be settled is simply this: Suppose 100 lbs. of pork will keep a certain number of men a given length of time in good health and in full strength. Will



100 lbs. of beef or 100 lbs. of mutton keep the same number of men for the same length of time in equal health and strength? If there are differences, it is of great importance to ascertain the exact numerical expression of such difference, as it is only in this way that we can make our purchases in the most economical manner. For example, if we ascertain that 120 lbs. of beef and 140 lbs. of mutton are required to keep the same number of men for the same length of time as 100 lbs. of pork, we have a clear rule to guide our purchases. They will be equally cheap if the price of pork is \$10, beef \$8.33, and mutton \$7.13, per 100 lbs. If either of these kinds of meat rises or falls above or below the price named, the price of the others remaining stationery, it is cheaper or dearer than the others in proportion to the amount of the rise and fall. Thus, if pork falls to \$8 there is a saving of \$2 per 100 lbs. in purchasing this meat in preference to the others. There is the widest possible disagreement among men who have had the best practical opportunities for forming a judgment on this question. I have conversed with more than an hundred wardens of prisons and keepers of alms-houses, and I have scarcely found two who agreed in their opinions. Some think there is no difference between them; others think pork is by far the most nutritive; others give the preference to beef; and others again to mutton. I have been told by some that 100 lbs. of pork would go as far as 150 lbs. of beef; while others have been quite as sure that 100 lbs. of beef are equivalent to 120 lbs. of pork; and others declare that 100 lbs. of beef are equivalent to 200 lbs. of mutton. Then again, sir, we do not know whether paupers may not be kept as well on a diet wholly vegetable. There are many pauper establishments in Europe where no animal food whatever is allowed. In Ireland there are not a dozen poor-houses where meat is given from one year's end to the other. If this would answer in our climate, the expenses of the poor-houses might be diminished 50 per cent at once. We cannot tell whether meat is most nutritive boiled, or roasted, or hashed, or made into soup. I will give you the result of an experiment made to ascertain the relative value of boiled and roasted potatoes, which will cast more light on the importance of these inquiries than anything I could say.

The inspector of prisons in Scotland caused 40 men to be selected, as nearly equal to each other in size, health and strength, as possible. They were divided into two classes, 20 men in each. The dinner of one class consisted of 3 lbs. of *roasted* potatoes, and the dinner of the other consisted of 3 lbs. of *boiled* potatoes. The diet was the same in all *other* respects in both cases. At the end of the experiment, after two months' trial, it was found that all the prisoners on the *boiled* potato diet were in good health, and had gained on an average 4 lbs. each. One prisoner, only, had lost weight, amounting to 5 lbs 2 oz.; the greatest gain was 9 lbs. 4 oz. On the *roasted* potato diet the men were in good health, but there had been an average loss of  $1\frac{1}{2}$  lbs. weight. The greatest loss was 10 lbs. You perceive, sir, how important these questions are to the tax payers of the State. There are about 10,000 paupers in our poor-houses, nearly 2,000 prisoners in the State prisons, and over 1,000 persons in our penitentiaries, making an aggregate of 13,000 persons who are fed at the expense of the State. Hence, if, in consequence of increased knowledge of the relative value of different kinds of food, and the most economical method of cooking, we could save a shilling a week, the annual saving would be over \$85,000. It is, I think, clearly the duty of the State to institute experiments in our poor-houses and prisons. By so doing, it would not only effect a saving for itself, but its conclusions would be a great assistance to the poorer classes, and enable them to save a great deal by knowing what is *REALLY* cheapest.

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( No. 15. )

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State of the State of New-York:*

*Fourth.*—No systematic action is had for making the labor of paupers profitable. This difficulty is felt throughout the United States, as will be seen by the following statement. Most of the figures I have taken from the books of the several institutions, and the remainder from authentic public documents. They refer to the year 1851.

Alms House.	Average annual earnings of paupers, 1850.
Philadelphia, .....	\$4 71
Boston, .....	4 73
Suffolk county, Mass., .....	1 45
Essex county, " .....	4 53
Middlesex, " .....	3 70
Wooster, " .....	6 20
Hampshire, " .....	3 20
Hampden, " .....	2 90
Franklin, " .....	7 90
Berkshire, " .....	88
Norfolk, " .....	5 09
Bristol, " .....	4 35
Plymouth, " .....	4 46
Baltimore city, Maryland, .....	10 18
Providence, Rhode Island, .....	16 37
Average of all the alms houses in New-York State, ..	3 15

You perceive that the average annual earnings of each pauper in all the poor houses in the State of New-York was only \$3.15, while the average annual earnings of each pauper in the Providence alms house was \$16.37. If our paupers had been as judiciously managed as were the Providence paupers, one hundred and eighteen thousand nine hundred and eighty dollars would have been saved to the tax payers of the State. At the time when this account of the average earnings of the Providence paupers was taken, there was 136 in the house, of these 14 were insane 4 were too old for labor, 20 were sick and infirm, and 41 were children, making a total of 84 non-workers, and 52 workers, or 61 per ct. of the first and 39 per ct. of the second. In 1852, 132,399 persons were relieved and supported in this State. The returns only enable us to judge of the working abilities of 126,993; of these 599 were idiots, 233 were insane, 311 were blind; 1,888 were lame, 15,535 were sick, 636 were decrepid, 2,699 too old to work, 13,203 children, 45,463 whose condition is not given. If we suppose half of these whose condition is not given are able to work, we have 67,353 who are able to work, and 59,640 who are unable to work, or 53 per cent able to work and 47 per cent unable to



work. You see, therefore, that while we have 14 per cent more able bodied workers than they have in Providence, their average earnings are very nearly five times greater than ours! These facts tell their own story. In Providence the rule is that every one able to work must work. If they have no profitable employment for them they set them at something which is not profitable, at all events they must be kept employed. During my last visit I saw a party of men carrying wood from one corner of the yard to another and piling it there, when it was all removed it was brought back again and piled in the old place; a rigid adherence to this rule relieves Providence of all lazy drones, such as infest our poor houses to a great degree. They are the last ones to honor Providence with their presence, or if they do go there for a few days, they speedily bid it an affectionate adieu. Yet there is no poor house in the United States where the paupers are as luxuriously fed and as comfortably clothed as at Providence, with the exception of Newport, in the same State, and Philadelphia.

The poor law commissioners have established it as an inflexible rule throughout England, Wales and Ireland, that no relief whatever shall be given to any able bodied pauper without they perform a given task of work. The benefit of this rule both to the pauper and the rate payer is established in these reports by the strongest facts and arguments; I will not make quotations, but I hope you will not fail to study these reports with care, I believe you will find them all in the room over the law library in the capitol at Albany, but if any are missing I shall be happy to supply you with them from my own library on your application to the editor of this paper.

The reason of our ill success in making pauper labor remunerative is plain enough, we have never *tried* to make it profitable. Some men have a special faculty for making men labor profitably, others have no such faculty. If we would have a reform in this respect, we must begin by selecting men to manage the poor houses who have this special faculty; he should receive a sufficient remuneration for his services, and feel secure that every change in politics should not dispossess him from his position. Then he could devote himself to the task with vigor and with

hope, and we should soon see a change which would gladden the heart of the tax payer and the philanthropist. I have great confidence that our alms houses would then become very nearly self-supporting institutions. As the result of careful inquiry, I am of opinion that horticultural and agricultural labor are better adapted for children than any other. For winter employment some trades easily learned may be followed. For children; knitting socks and mittens for the younger, and the making of children's shoes for the older, are employments as well adapted to their capacities, and are as profitable as any that I have found. The boys at the Reform School, Boston, learn to make these shoes readily in a fortnight, and they readily turn off ten pairs in a day. Seating cane chairs, making umbrella structures, covering trunks are also well adapted for children. For adults I recommend mat making from the husks of corn, straw hat making, spinning, knitting, stone breaking for McAdamised roads, and pounding bones for manure. Some of them discover an astonishing aptitude for cutting and carving; these might be profitably employed in making from bones, islet pricklers, tooth picks, and similar articles, while others might cut childrens' toys out of wood, make pill boxes, match boxes, horse and fish nets, and other similar articles. In short sir, there is no want of profitable employment, nothing is wanted but the *right kind of men* to set them about it, and to keep them at it.

Truly yours,

FRANKLIN.

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(No. 16.)

To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State of the State of New York.*

*Fifth*—The children in the schools of our alms houses are very ill-instructed.

I have already spoken of this matter while considering the causes of the increase of pauperism, which I have already proved to exist, but I cannot pass over it without an allusion while discussing the abuses which exist in the management of our county poor houses. I beg to refer you to the statements

made in my ninth letter, and that you will re-peruse them carefully. When you have done so I think you will not accuse me of speaking at random when I pronounce our system, or rather *no* system of pauper education a disgrace to the State, and a still greater disgrace to those who are entrusted with its management. This subject has a double claim to your attention. It comes within your care as Superintendent of Common Schools as well as Secretary of State, and I shall therefore feel greatly disappointed if you do not adopt early and vigorous measures for its improvement.

*Sixth*—The hospital department of our poor houses is, in general, shamefully managed.

The general plan is for the superintendents to contract with some country doctor to attend the poor house for a small compensation, and one of his students generally does the work, in which he tries divers experiments, no doubt highly conducive to his own progress in science, but of more questionable advantage to the health and comfort of the patients. The amount paid for medicine and medical attendance last year was \$13,275.20, being an average of \$255 for each county, and includes not only the expense of the poor house hospital, but the medical attendance and medicine for the out-door poor. After this statement of niggardliness in dealing with physicians, you will be the less surprised when I assure you that 30 per cent.—nearly one-third of the inmates of our poor-houses—die annually. The exact statement for the year 1852 is as follows:—Average number in all the poor-houses of this State during the year, 11,603. The number of deaths was 2,967, or nearly 26 per cent. As a point of comparison with other institutions, let me assure you that the mortality of all the hospitals in the city of Paris is only 10 per cent on an average of 10 years. And the percentage, be it carefully remembered, is founded wholly on *sick* persons coming into them, while the percentage on our alms houses above given is founded on the sick and *well* together. If the calculation was based on the same principles as in the Paris hospitals the average would be at least 40 per cent. In other words the chances of mortality are four times greater in our poor-houses than in the Paris hospi-



tals. This, Mr. Secretary, is a burning shame and a withering disgrace. It would confer immortal glory on you if you should succeed in wiping it out. There are scarcely any of the poor houses provided with surgical instruments, or even the most common hospital apparatus, such as injection syringes, bed pans, stomach pumps, &c. In some cases the physician lives three or four miles from the poor-house, and in case of severe wounds the patient might die before the doctor got there and had collected the necessary instruments and apparatus.

*Seventh*—There is no classification in our poor-houses.

The poor of all classes and colors, all ages and habits, partake of a common fare, a common table, and a common dormitory. The poor widow who has occupied a respectable position in society, and who has been accustomed to the decencies and amenities of polished, intelligent and christian society, but in consequence of pecuniary misfortunes in her declining years, is compelled to resort to the poor house, finds herself seated at the table with a negro wench on one side of her and a filthy prostitute on the other. She sleeps in the same room with the degraded and the outcast, and is compelled the whole day to associate on equal terms, and to listen to the obscene and disgusting language of creatures who are utterly revolting to her feelings. Such a woman undergoes a daily martyrdom. To call such relief a public *charity* is a misnomer and a satire. It would be more charitable (were it not contrary to the divine law) to shut them in a close room in which several pans of charcoal were burning. The fare and the accommodations which prove so revolting to this class is a perfect luxury to another. Many of the inmates never lived so well in their lives, and never enjoyed half the conveniences and luxuries that are afforded them in the poor houses of New-York. Paupers ought to be classified, and the several classes kept strictly separate. No tax-payer would object to the *comfortable* support of the unfortunate and virtuous poor, while all would protest against offering inducements to the lazy, idle and vicious to throng our poor houses by giving them comforts superior to what they have ever enjoyed before.

*Eighth*—I have already alluded to the insane poor. I have only to add that the treatment of this class in some of our poor houses is well calculated to call forth all the indignant eloquence of Miss Dix. I cannot extend these letters by describing scenes of horror among the insane in our county poor houses, that I myself have witnessed. But I may remark that it is not more than six years since in the poor house of Columbia county, the insane slept in a cellar where the green mould covered the walls. Their beds were rough boxes of filthy straw, and they were not allowed bed-clothing lest they should tear it. Things are better now, but in all our poor-houses, the besom of reform finds wide scope for its action.

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( No. 17. )

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State of the State of New-York :*

My letters have swelled to such an unexpected length that I dare not trespass on your patience and the patience of my readers with any farther detailed statements of the abuses existing in the administration of our poor laws. I therefore waive any further exposition of these abuses, and proceed to explain the course that I deem most proper to adopt, in order to provide a remedy for them.

Before doing so, however, I deem it advisable to call your attention to a few general principles which are proper to be considered, and which will cast much light upon our pathway.

I have somewhere seen a classification of paupers in the following terms: "The Godly poor, the devilish poor, and the poor devils." I do not admire its irreverence and its flippancy; but it must nevertheless be confessed, that it gives a more graphic idea of the actual classes existing among the poor in fewer words than any form of expression I have ever met with. It does not include *all* who receive relief from the public purse, but it does the great mass. It is the general rule, but like all other general rules, it pre-supposes exceptions.

There is but one feeling in the community in relation to the Godly poor. Professing christians look on them as a legacy of

their crucified and risen Lord, and rejoice to testify their sense of gratitude and love to him for the inestimable benefits which he has conferred upon them by his suffering and death, by contributing of their substance to the necessities of those who are their fellow heirs of the same faith, and fellow partakers in the same precious promises. Nor is this feeling confined to professing christians alone. Those who are most careless of the claims of religion, and those who are even most hostile to the christian faith, concur in their willingness and even desire, that this class should be comfortably provided for, that their temporal necessities should be liberally supplied, and that their feelings should be spared every unnecessary wound. Their uncomplaining meekness, their reverend demeanor, and their deep and affectionate gratitude for kindness rendered to them, overcome the most selfish hearts with pity, and dispose the most mercenary to contribute to the alleviation of their sufferings. Were there no other classes among the poor of the land, there would be no necessity for governmental interference, or for any provisions for compulsory relief. The christian and philanthropic feelings of the community would lead to an abundant supply of all their wants.

The "devilish poor" form a most unlovable class. A portion of them are most disgusting hypocrites; they have words of godliness on their lips, but malice and all evil in their heart. They lie, cheat, and swindle at every opportunity. They are lazy, intemperate, and vicious. There is no strong anxiety on the part of the community to pamper the appetites of the "devilish poor," nor no anxious solicitude about the softness of their beds, or the fineness of their linen. It must be confessed that such anxiety and solicitude, if it existed, were misplaced. Such as these deserve no sympathy or extra care; if it were extended to them, it would offer a premium to idleness, and discourage those who are industriously supporting their families by dint of slightly recompensed toil. But we must be just, even to the "devilish poor." They are generally the offspring of idle and dissolute parents—they were never trained to habits of order, industry, or thrift—they never saw the interior of a church or school—never listened to the voice of kindness or affection—nor never witnessed self-denial or struggling against temptation in any of their associates.



How can they be expected to be better than they are when we remember the disastrous influences to which they have been exposed from infancy ?

The "poor devils" are not generally disliked; they are good natured, careless, and amusing. They fish and shoot; are always on hand on all occasions when a crowd assembles; they are knowing men at horse-races, are the most delighted spectators at general trainings, are the most noisy of patriots at elections, are far more faithful in their attendance at bar-rooms than at church, are far more familiar with cards and dominoes than with their bibles. When they go to the poor house, few begrudge them their support; most tax-payers feel a sort of pleasure and complacency that such a place is provided for them where they may whistle and sing, and finally sink into their graves without suffering the pangs of hunger and want. Yet this class, in general, deserves less pity than the "devilish poor." They have mostly been better educated, and entered upon life better fitted to grapple with its "infinite toil and endeavor." They have never deliberately dedicated themselves to idleness. Their choice between industry and shiftlessness has been more deliberate. I have noticed these three classes for the purpose of calling your attention to an attribute common to them all. It is a want of something, which the masses speak of as "having no faculty." Many of them are willing to work, but have not brains enough to make their work remunerative. Like Mr. Macawber, they are always waiting for "something to turn up." They have no forethought, hence what they have to sell is sold in the cheapest market and what they buy is always purchased in the dearest.

Yours truly,

FRANKLIN.

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( No. 18. )

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State of the State of New-York:*

III. I now proceed to speak of some of the measures, which in my opinion would tend to diminish the evils complained of.

*First.*—We have seen that the most of the evils complained of have arisen either (a) from a want of proper powers conferred on

poor law officers, (b) from mal-administration of those powers, (c) from ignorance of the true principles on which their powers should be exercised, and which ignorance arises, not from negligence on their part, but from neglect of the State to investigate and ascertain the facts necessary to be known, (d) from the want of an intelligent central supervision, (e) from the want of a uniform and reliable system of accounts, (f) by frequent changes of officers, by which the whole body of poor law officers are continually learning their business, and as soon as it is learned, they are discharged and others taken as apprentices. What we want then is, to frame a body of poor law, which shall obviate these and all other difficulties, and introduce such other positive improvements as shall provide for the *comfortable* maintenance of the virtuous and unfortunate poor—for the employment of the idle, and lazy, and shiftless poor—for the rapid and efficient cure of the sick and disabled poor—for the education and industrious training of poor children, and for aiding and encouraging industry among the poor, who are not as yet the subjects of public charity. In other words, we wish the Government to imitate the dealings of Divine Providence, and act as its agent in relation to the poor of the land.—To accomplish this purpose a uniform, coherent, and intelligible system must be devised. It must be a whole—complete in all its parts—each member working in entire harmony with all the others, to produce a definite and foreseen result. No patching of our present poor laws will answer this purpose. You must perceive we must begin at the beginning, and with a comprehensive and intelligent grasp of all the details of the question, enact a complete code which shall accomplish the desired result. For this purpose my first recommendation is, that the Legislature shall appoint a commission of three persons, whose duty it shall be to visit all the poor houses in the State, carefully examine the condition of each, the number and condition of the paupers, the food and diet given them, the condition of the insane, the education of the children, the mode of keeping accounts, and in short all the details of their management. They shall also investigate, as far as they may be able, the causes of pauperism, and the best mode of repressing it. They should also be required to visit and examine some of the best institutions for the relief of the poor in the large

cities of the northern States, and make a diligent examination of the poor laws of all the States. In addition to this they should procure from the consuls of the United States, through the Secretary of the U. S., such information in relation to the poor laws of the places where they reside, and the operation of such laws in diminishing pauperism, as it may be in their power to furnish. After procuring this information they should then proceed to prepare a code of poor laws for this State, which should be best adapted in their judgment to accomplish the end in view. If the expense of three commissioners should be objected to, I should be perfectly willing to confine it to one, provided that one was John C. Spencer. I know of no other single man in the State who I consider fully competent to perform the task in a manner perfectly satisfactory.

*Second*—In case such a commission is appointed, I would recommend for their consideration the election of a central poor board, to be composed of a State Superintendent of the poor, to be elected by the county superintendents of the poor—this officer in conjunction with the Secretary of State and the State Engineer to form the poor law board. All rules and regulations adopted by the county superintendents for the government of the county poor houses, should be submitted to them for examination and approval. This board should devise a uniform system of keeping the accounts of poor houses, and have power to change them from time to time. They should also prescribe the form of the annual reports of the county superintendents. No county should hereafter build a county house, or make any repairs beyond \_\_\_\_\_ dollars, without obtaining the approval of the central board of the plan for such building or repairs. The board should acquaint themselves with the best plans for building such houses, and should be required to furnish plans on application of the county superintendents.

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( No. 19. )

TO ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, *Secretary of State elect, of the State of New-York:*

This Central Board, the organization of which I recommended in my last letter, should provide for a regular and thorough sys-  
[Senate, No. 72.]



tem of experiments, to ascertain the best and most economical methods of feeding the poor ; this will include the relative and absolute values of different articles of diet, with respect to economy and healthfulness. The State Superintendent of the Poor should visit every poor house annually, and audit the accounts of the keeper and county superintendent. From this latter provision I anticipate the most marked and valuable results.

*Third.*—Six persons should be elected as county superintendents of the poor. The office of poor master should be abolished, and their duties devolved on the supervisors. The county superintendent should be invested with all the authority that the poor masters now possess. We have seen that many of the abuses now existing have their origin in the bad selection of men to fill the station of county superintendents, and that this mal-selection is caused almost inevitably by the manner of their selection. Unless this is changed, we cannot hope for improvement. I have already discussed the evils of party selection for this office, in my 13th letter, and shall add no more in this connection, other than to ask you to refresh your recollection by a re-perusal of that letter. I propose that, in the first instance, each elector shall ballot for *three* persons to fill the office of county superintendents of the Poor, and that the *six* persons having the greatest number of votes shall be declared elected ; these six persons to divide themselves into three classes, by lot, immediately after election ; the first class to hold office for two years, the second for four, and the third for six. Thereafter, at the end of every second year, two persons to be chosen as above (only each elector will vote for one person, and the two having the greatest number of votes, to be elected, and to hold their office for six years.) This plan is not inconsistent with existing analogies. The Governors of the Alms House in the city of New-York are now so elected, and the Inspectors of elections are also chosen in the same way. The alms-house department in New-York has worked admirably under this system ; a great saving in expense has accrued to the city, the prisoners and paupers are vastly better managed, discipline is maintained efficiently and without severity, and all the desirable objects of the establishment are now nearly accomplished. The constant changes in the heads of departments which formerly

took place at every fluctuation of politics, prevented any interest being taken by the respective wardens, superintendents, and keepers, in the good management of their departments. It was the prevalent idea that as soon as they qualified themselves for their offices, and got their affairs in good order, some one would step in and reap all the advantages of their labors. They therefore took no pains about the matter, enjoyed their salaries and perquisites, (which were the most precious morsels in the whole affair,) and left the public interests committed to their care to take care of themselves, or go without care. There is nothing of this kind now; parties may fluctuate as they will, but no efficient and faithful officer is turned out of his place on account of his politics. Hence, under the intelligent supervision of the Ten Governors, each man labors to perfect the details of his department, in full confidence that he will receive full credit for all the improvements he may introduce, and all the efficiency he may manifest. They now have a *motive* to discharge their duties faithfully, and this motive is in general strong enough to secure their fidelity.

Another part of the New-York system is well worthy to be incorporated into the proposed general code. The Ten Governors only appoint the superintendents and clerks of the departments. The superintendents appoint all subordinate officers, and thus are enabled to secure their prompt obedience and faithful co-operation. If anything goes wrong, the Governors look for redress solely to the superintendent, who is responsible for everything to them, as the inferior officers are responsible to him. This plan works exceedingly well in practice, and I would not hesitate for a moment to incorporate a provision into the proposed law, that every keeper of a county poor house should have the selection of all inferior employees required for the management of the institution. If commissioners are appointed by the State for a revision of the poor laws, I would strongly recommend to them a very minute study of the system pursued in the New-York Alms House department.

Yours truly,

FRANKLIN.

(No. 20.)

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State of the State of New-York:*

I must not forget to mention that my testimony to the excellence of the Ten Governors system refers to what it has been rather than to what it now is. There is nothing even now very reprehensible, but still there are evidences of deterioration from its unequalled excellence which I would wish to guard against in a general system for the State. They expend between \$600,000 and \$700,000 annually, and the aggregate amount of salaries paid to persons in their employment is between \$60,000 and \$70,000. This expenditure and patronage is attractive to many men who have not the proper qualifications for office, and hence they seek to obtain nominations from their respective parties, rather for the reputation it gives and the influence it confers than from an honest desire to labor for the advancement of the benevolent objects confided to the board. Experience shows that the class of men best adapted for these offices are men of wealth, who have retired from business. Their wealth places them above all desire to make money out of the office, either directly or indirectly. They have acquired in business a competent knowledge of human nature, they understand accounts, and are not easily mystified by false or erroneous entries, and have reached an age when the violence of passion is stilled, and the reason and judgment are still in the meridian of their vigor. It is believed that there are enough of such men in every county of the State who would take a pride and a pleasure in discharging the duties of the office without any other remuneration than the payment of their actual travelling expenses. The amount paid to superintendents for their services in 1852 was \$40,583. It is believed that \$4,000 would pay all the necessary travelling expenses; there would therefore be saved about \$36,000 annually.

In order to secure the services of first rate men, I would narrow the constituency by providing that no one should vote for superintendents who did not pay \$1 or 2 to the supervisors of the town for the benefit of the poor—the supervisors to keep an accurate list of such payments and furnish copies thereof to the in-



spectors of election. No one would contribute in this way who did not feel a *real* interest in the poor, and by so doing would furnish a substantial guarantee that he would carefully select those who were best fitted for the station. You will probably think, sir, that this proposition is shockingly un-democratic. Perhaps it is, but it will certainly prove very efficacious. Should it prove so, I, for one, shall be very willing to excuse its anti-democratic tendencies. I would confer on these superintendents all the powers of the present superintendents except as herein otherwise provided, and also all the powers of the present poor-masters. They should meet once a month at the poor-house, as a board, and one of them should visit it for the purpose of inspection twice in each week. At such visits he should see every pauper and every room, and write a summary account of his visit in a book to be kept for the purpose, noting every infraction of the rules, and any other impropriety which he may notice, and also all such orders as he may give for their correction, and sign such entry with his name and the date of his visit. This plan will secure thorough inspection, and what is almost equally important, it will preserve the evidence of it.

*Fourth*—A workhouse should be established in almost every county in the State. There may be some counties where this would be unnecessary, but the necessity in each county could be judged of by the codifiers during their visit to such county. The workhouse may be connected with the almshouse; if desirable it may be under the same roof, or it may be a separate establishment, located in a different town. Generally the poor-house should be located near the geographical centre of travel in the county, but a workhouse should evidently be located where the greatest amount of profitable employment can be obtained. Where these two conditions are united in any location there the two establishments may be united in one, and managed by the same officers. All sick, aged, decrepid persons, and all idios and lunatics, should be lodged in the almshouse proper. All other persons requiring aid should be sent to the workhouse, and compelled to labor at some profitable employment, if such could be procured; but whether profitable or unprofitable, they should be compelled to labor to the utmost of their ability.

( No. 21. )

The plan of making labor systematically compulsory on all paupers not of the class excepted in my last letter, may strike many humane persons as novel, and what is worse, as cruel. If I know my own heart I would revolt as quickly from any thing like unkindness and inhumanity towards the poorer classes as any living being, but I am persuaded from a most careful examination of the operation of this principle at home and abroad, and from a knowledge of the habits and dispositions of the poor, that this measure is imperatively called for by the highest sanctions of humanity. It is a medicine, and like all other medicines it is nauseous to the taste but in the highest degree salutary in its operation. This principle, in connexion with some others which I shall soon have the honor of laying before you, is in my opinion the only means of averting the terribly rapid rates of increase of pauperism which I have demonstrated to exist in my 3d, 4th and 5th letters. In connection with this subject, I must beg you to re-peruse the 8th, 11th and 12th letters of this series. I am sensible that I have not done full justice to these subjects, a large stock of facts and observations in relation to them are yet untouched, because I desired to keep these letters within reasonable limits, but I think from what has already been said, that from the suggestions which will naturally arise in your mind in reflecting on it, you will be convinced that a measure of this kind, in connection with some improvement in our existing laws in relation to vagrancy and mendicity, are absolutely called for by the exigency of the times.

*Fifth.* It should be compulsory on the superintendents to send all paupers to the State Lunatic Asylum for two years if not sooner cured, as soon as they manifest unequivocal indications of insanity. This would be consistent with sound principles of economy. Hundreds of insane paupers are now taken care of at the public expense during their whole lives, who might have now been earning their own living and adding to the wealth of the community, if they had enjoyed an opportunity of being cured while their disease was curable. It appears from authentic statistics that 40

per cent of all the patients received into the asylums are discharged cured. But of recent cases about 70 per cent are discharged cured. This large premium on early admissions demonstrates the economy and the necessity of the proposed law. It not unfrequently happens among the ignorant and especially among the Irish poor, that the removal of their insane friends to an asylum is strenuously resisted. In such cases if the superintendents are unable to accomplish the removal by persuasion they should be empowered to remove them forcibly, unless the parties enter into a bond with sufficient sureties to indemnify the county against all cost or charge on account of the insane person. For further details on this subject I refer you to my 10th letter.

*Sixth.* The superintendents of the county poor should be charged with the oversight and assistance of the out-door poor, which may be afforded in various ways. They should be made a corporation for the purposes of this act and be authorised to sue and be sued, in the name of their chairman. They should be authorised and required to establish pauper savings banks in every county in which sums as small as twenty-five cents should be received on deposit, and interest allowed as soon as the deposit amounted to one dollar, say 2 per cent on \$1,00; 3 per cent on all sums between \$1,00 and 3,00; 4 per cent on sums between \$3,00 and \$5,00; and 5 per cent on all sums over \$5,00. This increased scale of interest in proportion to the amount of the deposit will be a powerful stimulus to efforts for accumulation. When a poor person has once accumulated five dollars and he knows that sum is constantly increasing without effort on his part a great object has been effected. You can have no idea how much the existence of pauperism depends on want of *forecast*, unless you have mingled much among the poor, seen their habits, and listened to their habitual conversation. They literally "take no thought for the morrow." If they have enough to support them a week, they will recklessly spend it all on the pleasures of to-day without caring or thinking where the provision for to-morrow is to come from, and those who live in luxury during summer when their earnings are ample, suffer all the privations of penury during the winter, when they might have lived comfortably during the entire year



if they had exercised the slightest prudence or economy. They think there is a sort of moral impossibility, for them to get ahead in the world, and that there is a sort of fatality that keeps them poor, they therefore are determined to get all the good they can out of their earnings while they have them, without troubling themselves about the future. I believe sir that the establishment of saving banks as proposed, will do more to break up this feeling, than any other measure that can be adopted.

Yours truly,  
FRANKLIN.

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(No. 22.)

*To the Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State of the State of New-York.*

*Seventh*—With a view to the assistance and encouragement of the poor, and to cultivate a disposition to economise and to provide for the future, the superintendents should be required to purchase large quantities of fuel and salt meat at such times as they are at minimum prices, and dispose of those articles at prime cost during the winter. This measure should be conducted with great prudence lest the regular trader should be injuriously interfered with, or the poor should themselves attempt to make a profit, but I am confident rules can be framed which will avoid all abuses if the right men are chosen for superintendents.

*Eighth*—I have already remarked that a certain class of the poor are very willing to work if they could obtain it, but they have no faculty for procuring it; they seem to be utterly incapable of setting themselves to work. There would be little difficulty in making effectual provisions for this want of the poor, if the town clerks of each town were required to keep a register in which the name of every person wanting work should be enrolled, and the kind of work he or she was able to do. This book should be at all times open for the inspection of persons wanting to employ hands. Every Monday morning a transcript of such register should be forwarded to the office of the county clerk, who should be required to enter them all in a book to be provided by

him for the purpose. Thus, any employer, by going to the county clerk's office, could see at a glance the residence and qualifications of every laborer in the county. At a small expense a very great benefit would be conferred on both the employers and the laborers. This system of registry to be under the inspection and direction of the county superintendent of the poor.

*Ninth*—There are many voluntary organizations in each county for the benefit of the poor—there are Dorcas societies, soup societies, orphan societies, &c. It should be the duty of superintendents to put themselves in communication with these associations, and by advice, assistance and co-operation, endeavor to increase the sphere of their usefulness. It is believed that much good might be thus effected by procuring more *unity* of effort on the part of those citizens who esteem it their pleasure and their duty to minister to the wants of the poor. The superintendents from their central position would be better informed of the points where labor and assistance was most needed, and would therefore be enabled to direct every kind of talent which might be voluntarily offered to the sphere of its most useful employment.

*Tenth*—Efficient rules should be adopted to guard against abuses in the apprenticeship of pauper children. Full enquiries should be made as to the character of the proposed master, and the answer should be made a matter of record. The parents or friends of the apprentice should be cited to attend, and their objections, if any, should be recorded and carefully weighed. The master should not be allowed to remove the apprentice from the town where he was originally bound without the consent in writing of the superintendents. The indentures should fully declare the duties of the master and provide for a proper amount of schooling and the provision of the necessary school books. A list of pauper apprentices in each town should be furnished on the 1st day of October in each year to the town superintendent of common schools of such town, by the superintendents of the poor. It should be the duty of the town superintendents annually to make a special report to the State superintendent of common schools, as to the manner in which the stipulations with regard to education in the indentures have been complied

with. This plan would, I think, effectually obviate the difficulties stated in my ninth letter, and would greatly tend to elevate the character of the State and the condition of the poor.

*Eleventh*—The schools in our county houses should be made district schools. No teacher should be employed who has not received a full certificate from the town superintendent, and such schools should be allowed to participate in the public money, so far, at least, as to receive its distributive share of *library money*. The superintendents should be required to furnish them with suitable seats, desks, books, stationery and apparatus. If these provisions are carried out in good faith a burning disgrace will be removed from the character of our State, and I am confident it will dry up a very considerable tributary to the broad stream of pauperism.

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( No. 23. )

*Twelfth*—The superintendents should be required to classify the poor according to their previous standing in life, their moral character and personal habits, so that the virtuous, respectable, and unfortunate poor should not be brought into revolting contact with the degraded and vicious outcasts of society. This class should be better fed and more comfortably accommodated than the other.

*Thirteenth*—In Maryland the superintendents are required to open an account with each pauper, debiting them with food and clothing, and crediting them with the value of their services; until the account is made to balance, the superintendent may forcibly detain them in the poor house. It would be well to consider whether such a provision would not be useful here. I am not prepared to recommend it unequivocally, but I think the idea worthy of full consideration.

*Fourteenth*—The custody of the prisoners in the county jail should be taken from the sheriff and transferred, together with the appointment of the jailor and the police of the jail, to the county superintendents of the poor. I will not now trouble you



with the reasons for this change, because the statement of them would swell these letters too much. I am prepared, however, to state them at length, if you or the codifiers should desire them.

*Fifteenth*—The superintendents should be the board of health for the county, and as such they should be required to watch over the public health, to remove nuisances, to prevent the spread of contagious diseases and to provide a general and gratuitous plan for universal vaccination.

*Finally*—You will observe that the proposed plan embraces provisions :

For an efficient *central* inspection of the affairs of the poor.

For an improvement in the science of pauper management.

For securing a higher class of officers in the counties.

For elevating the character and assisting the out-door poor.

For the education of pauper children.

For uniting legal and voluntary aid to poor persons.

For an improved mode of apprenticeship.

For making the poor industrious, and diminishing the expenses of their support in work-house.

For making more comfortable provisions for the virtuous and unfortunate, and a better discipline for the idle and vicious.

Such as it is, all the provisions of the plan are now before you. If I have succeeded in convincing you that real evils exist which may be cured by legislative interference, I sincerely hope you will use your great and acknowledged influence with the Legislature to induce them to appoint a commission to effect a thorough revision of the poor laws. Should such a commission be appointed, it will afford me great pleasure to supply them with many details which have been omitted in these letters for the sake of brevity.

I am prepared, should the commissioners desire it, to give them a plan for the organization of work-houses, embracing the persons

to be received into it, the time they should be kept in it, the employment to be pursued, the rules for its discipline, the plan for its erection, and all other necessary details for its management, and also the facts and observations on which the plan is founded.

My work is now finished, and cordially commending the views which are presented in it to your serious and candid consideration,  
I remain truly yours,

FRANKLIN.

### Supplementary Letter to the Secretary of State.

To *Hon. ELIAS W. LEAVENWORTH, Secretary of State of the State of New-York:*

I cannot doubt that you have read the account of the horrid scenes that have recently occurred at the Buffalo Poor House. Within twenty-four hours, fifteen insane and seven sane persons in that establishment, passed out of time into eternity. They were not slaughtered by the knife, by the axe, or the revolver, but they were not the less really nor the less wickedly slaughtered, by famine, by filth, and by cruel neglect. Have you not felt a sense of shame, of sorrow, of unutterable loathing, that such things should occur amid the boasted civilization of the nineteenth century, here in the very midst of us, in the western metropolis of the Empire State? Have you not remembered the declaration of our Lord: "The poor ye have always with you?" Have you experienced no dread of a visible manifestation of His wrath, who hath said, "He that oppresseth the poor reproacheth his Maker;" and "For the oppression of the poor and the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord."

With me, you have desired to strike off the shackles of the slave; like me, you have mourned over those detestable cruelties incident to slavery, which have recently been made patent to the whole world, through the agency of "Uncle Tom," and have argued that such cruelty could only exist in an atmosphere of slavery. We have tried to show the evil of slavery by its reflex influence, in debasing the moral feelings of the masters. Are you not fearful that when this affair reaches the South the slavehold-

ers will give us back a taste of our own argument, and tell us that there is a wider scope for the exercise of *their* philanthropy at the north, than there is for *ours* among the slaves of the south.

You cannot say, sir, you were not forewarned of the sad state of our poor houses. It is true that in my letters last winter I did not seek to excite your indignation against the administrators, nor your sympathies for the sufferings of the poor; but you will find, on reference to the sixteenth letter, that the existence of such abuses is clearly indicated, and I now add that I had the Buffalo poor house in my mind while writing it, and there are many others in the State that stand equally in need of reform. Had you presented the facts contained in my letters of last winter to the Legislature, under your official sanction, (there are none which you might not easily verify,) and recommended a visitation of our poor houses by commissioners authorised to send for persons and papers, there cannot be a shadow of doubt that it would have received the sanction of that body. Such a visitation would have prevented the horrid atrocities that have been enacted at Buffalo, and at other places which have not yet been brought to light. You would have been the honored instrument of saving much human life, and much disgrace to our State, and procured a fund of valuable information, on which the ensuing Legislature might act, for the suppression of these and still greater evils for the future. Depend upon it, sir, something must be done soon to cure the multifold evils of our poor laws. Were the people informed of half the wastefulness, the brutality, and the neglect, which flows from them, they would rise en masse and insist on their abrogation. I did hope, sir, that you would have taken the lead in this great work; and although, from past neglect, these hopes are diminished, I can still hardly bring myself to believe that you will finally quit office without one effort to confer honor on yourself, and advantage on the State, by ameliorating what Samuel Young once said were emphatically the "*Poor Laws*" of our statute book.

Yours truly,

FRANKLIN.























